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WASHINGTON OFFICE

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Annual Walk with the Warriors Event Recognizes Native Veterans

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Contact: Michael Wero, NNWO
202-775-0393 x206

Washington DC - As a breeze rolled over the hollowed grounds of Arlington Cemetery yesterday, a group of Native Veterans and others gathered to recognize the sacrifices made by Native Americans in the defense of freedom while serving in the armed forces.

"I am honored to be involved in recognizing the sacrifices our Native American Veterans have made so that we can continue to live free," said Omer Begay Jr., (Greasewood Springs), one of several Council Delegates who attended the ceremony.

Other speakers at the ceremony, now in its eighth year and coordinated by Navajo veteran Jake Singer, included Judith Young from Gold Star Mothers, Susan Naill from Blue Star Mothers and US Army (retired) Lt. John Dooley from Operation Carry the Flame. All the speakers thanked the service of Native Americans for their history of service for America and asked for additional recognition for the Gold and Blue Star Mothers of Native Nations.

The speakers also applauded everyone involved the drive to rally Congress to establish November 7 formally as Native American Veterans Day, especially Representative Rick Renzi (R-AZ 1st) who has continually pushed for such legislation since first elected in 2002

"We're grateful by the efforts of Representative Renzi to request President Bush to formally establish November 7 as Native American Veterans Day," said Council Delegate LeRoy Thomas (Dilkon). "While this designation has not yet occurred, we are optimistic we will be successful."

After the rally, a solemn walk began at Arlington Cemetery, crossed Memorial Bridge, passed the Lincoln Memorial and ended with laying flowers at the World War II memorial.

Representatives from the Navajo Nation Washington Office, the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs that also involved Angela Barney-Nez from the Office of Speaker Lawrence Morgan also attended the event which also included visits to Capitol Hill and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"I hope all of Native Nations will join me in thanking and supporting our native men and women currently fighting the war on terrorism," said Council Delegate Woody Lee (Sweetwater), "They represent a long history of service by our people."

Captions - Photo 1: Walk with the Warriors organizer Jake Singer addresses the ceremony audience.
Photo 2: Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leroy Thomas addresses the ceremony audience.

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